



in hard plastic shells, to keep them from becoming bruised or misshapen. It's why every image of fruit or vegetables you see is accompanied by some variation of the following phrase: "We only select the choicest, ripest, healthiest food and bring it to you." Never mind that, mathematically, this would mean that only 10 percent of all produce would ever show up at the supermarket. Agriculture sells this, then backs up its guarantee by making 90 percent or more of its product appear to be choicest, ripest and healthiest. We are all above average, and so is our food.

This, in a nutshell, is why the light brown apple moth (LBAM) represents enough of a threat for the state to contemplate emergency, radical eradication even though it has no proven ill health effects on produce, and presents little obvious impact on the natural environment other than causing an adjustment in the food chain. If California's produce doesn't look as good as somewhere else's, it will be more difficult to sell, fetch lower prices on the market, and ultimately

collapse an entire industry's value. As a commodity, produce suffers from the same psychic weaknesses as currency—when buyers stop believing in its value, then its value virtually evaporates. Worse, while the cosmetic damage might be enough to depress California agriculture by itself, the prospect of a spreading LBAM will cause other regions dependent upon agricultural produce to do what California has done to Australian and Hawaiian produce for years: pass it through time-consuming and expensive quarantines that drive the price of export above what the market will bear, effectively banning it by tariff. Canada and Mexico have already signalled the alert that they will not accept LBAM in their ecosystems. Not only do they want to avoid the control and eradication problem, but they have much to gain if their produce looks better, on the whole, than California's.

Basically, LBAM is like genital warts: not going to kill you by itself, but nobody wants it, and that's going to put a serious damper on your ability to get around.

A.G. Kawamura, the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), has become the face of the state effort to control the moth

through a combined effort of sticky traps, pesticidal goo, predatory wasps, and the aerial application of a pheromone known as Checkmate intended to interrupt the moth's breeding cycle. In case you've been living under a rock, this last aspect of the program (which resulted in a few days of spraying last November, and is slated to continue for years with new applications beginning this June) has caused an uproar in the 10 counties where LBAM has been discovered, including Santa Cruz. The tremendous backlash has taken many forms, from highly organized citizen action groups to panicked residents wondering if, indeed, they should commence living under a rock.

On April 24, the city and county's injunction meant to stall the spraying will be heard in Santa Cruz County Superior Court. The essence of the legal case is that the CDFA has not followed its own rules, or those of the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA), in determining that Checkmate is safe to spray. The department declared LBAM to be an emergency infestation in order to complete last

November's spray without CEQA review. In the absence of copious testing, alarmed citizens have reported ill health effects stemming from that spray—mainly the onset of asthma symptoms. Other strange environmental occurrences last winter, such as the unusually potent red tide and the mysterious spate of sea bird deaths, were blamed on the spray as well. Anti-spray groups have grabbed at any evidence of ill health effects to highlight the dangerous nature of what was supposed to be an inert, non-toxic pheromone application.

The California Alliance to Stop the Spray (CASS) is the unifying organization of several citizen action groups (stopthespray.org, LBAMspray.com, CASSonline.org, and others) which circulates the message that biochemical pesticides should not be tested in populated areas, that eradication of the moth is unlikely, and that there is a "lack of an effective adverse effects monitoring system for assessing the potential for adverse human health effects," a repetitive way of say-

